

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Utilizing Creative Writing Instruction to Support Adolescent Emotional Development and  
Mental Well-Being

CARA HIMMEL  
SPRING 2023

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements  
for baccalaureate degrees  
in Secondary Education and English  
with honors in Secondary Education

Reviewed and approved\* by the following:

Charlotte Land  
Assistant Professor of Education  
Thesis Supervisor & Honors Adviser

Michelle Knotts  
Assistant Teaching Professor of Education  
Faculty Reader

\* Electronic approvals are on file.

## ABSTRACT

Creative writing has been proven to be a valuable tool for expressing emotions and processing trauma (e.g., Deveney and Lawson, 2021; Lee, 2021; Litten, 2022). While the school environment often compounds student trauma, creative writing practices have the opportunity “to help each student build healthy relationships with themselves and with the world around them” (Tsatsou-Nikolouli, 2020, p. 179). When students’ emotional development and well-being are centered in the classroom, there is more equitable opportunity for them to thrive. Incorporating creative writing into English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum can bolster academic success and support students during the tumultuous period of adolescence (e.g. Coleman, 2021; Sandbäck Forsell et al., 2021). In my thesis, I present a creative writing unit that has the potential to aid students’ emotional and social development. This unit provides the opportunity and support necessary for students to experiment with their identity in a classroom environment that celebrates all aspects of their creativity and personality.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

LIST OF FIGURES .....	iii
Chapter 1 Unit Rationale .....	1
Chapter 2 Unit Overview.....	12
Chapter 3 Performance Tasks.....	15
Writing Journals.....	15
Poetry Performance .....	15
Poetry Portfolio.....	16
Chapter 4 Daily Lessons.....	18
Appendix A Sample Minilesson.....	30
Appendix B Rubrics .....	32
FCAs: Poetry Performance .....	32
FCAs: Poetry Portfolio .....	33
Appendix C Supplemental Materials.....	34
Mentor Text Bank.....	34
Freewriting Prompts .....	35
Bio Poem .....	35
Observation/Feedback Sentence Stems .....	36
Peer Review Worksheet.....	37
Portfolio Checklist .....	39
References .....	40

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1 ..... 12  
Figure 2 ..... 14

## Chapter 1

### Unit Rationale

My journey with creative writing began in middle school. That was when I first learned how creative writing, and the freedom that that specific medium provides, was a great outlet for self-expression and personal development. It was also in middle school that I first began to struggle with my anxiety and mental health. As the middle school years progressed and I found myself deep in adolescence's biological and hormonal throes, the anxiousness I had felt throughout my childhood started to spiral out of control. My anxious thoughts were constant and all-consuming. Even roughly a decade later, I struggle to put words to the paralyzing worry and dread that consumed my life. Nothing I could say could accurately articulate how badly I was struggling or how desperate I was not to feel that way. Then I found creative writing. I am not here to say that creative writing is a panacea for all mental illnesses. In truth, my mental well-being did not significantly take an upturn until I began seeing a therapist and was put on medication. However, I can confidently say that finding creative writing saved my life.

Writing gave me an outlet to express how I felt when I could not verbalize my struggles. Having that outlet was so freeing, and it also allowed me to write to get my emotions out rather than resort to less healthy coping mechanisms. Writing gave me a space to articulate my pain and feelings, and it also served as a means to share my struggles and ask for help. My writing became a cry out when I was not brave enough to ask for help myself. This cry for help eventually led to me receiving support. This experience is why I believe creative writing instruction is so important. It provides students a platform to express emotions and experiences that are

sometimes too difficult or complex to articulate verbally. This writing can also serve as a bridge between struggling adolescents and the support that they need.

While I believe that creative writing can help students practice and meet important academic goals, I am also steadfast in my belief that the personal expression and sharing of creative writing within the classroom are beneficial in ways not captured by dominant educational standards. The teaching, writing, and sharing of creative writing provides students with a space for personal development, expression, and emotional processing that is rarely afforded in educational settings. I know from personal experience the influence these affordances can have on a student's life. In addition, there is a collection of evidence that supports my assertion of the benefits of creative writing for adolescent students. Through extensive research and observation, it is clear that creative writing can aid in processing emotions and trauma, provide an outlet for those with mental illness and other emotional issues, and support adolescents through that tumultuous period.

One of the ways that creative writing can support students' well-being is by aiding them in processing emotions and trauma (e.g., Deveney and Lawson, 2021; Litten, 2022). Creative writing instruction gives students a sense of agency and creates a supportive classroom environment by creating space for students to express and attend to their emotions openly. Creative writing can be a valuable tool to help students build healthy relationships with themselves and the world around them. For the curriculum I have created, students will engage in two types of creative writing: freewriting and poetry. These three writing styles provide the greatest outlet for self-expression and emotional processing.

Freewriting will be an important part of my creative writing curriculum. At the start of each class, students will be given fifteen minutes for freewriting. The emphasis of this activity

will not be on the written product but on the act of writing. The goal is to have students practice habitual writing and use this writing to express and process. As Litten (2022) explains, there is a “transformative power of the act of writing itself without concern for the writing product” (p. 400). Students will be provided with a bank of freewriting prompts. They will also be encouraged to use the space to get their thoughts out in a stream-of-consciousness style. The goal of this writing is not to have a polished piece that uses a slew of literary devices but rather to get one’s thoughts out of their head and down onto paper. Having students write in this manner promotes self-expression and reduces stress and anxiety. In addition to the mental and emotional benefits of freewriting, there are also educational benefits. Freewriting practices increase students’ writing and reading abilities by increasing writing confidence and exposing students to writing and reading in a low-stress context (Pennebaker, 1997). Thus, freewriting is a solid pedagogical tool for both academic skills development and emotional processing.

Poetry also provides an excellent opportunity for students to express their inner thoughts and feelings. As Baxley and Sealey-Ruiz (2021) posit, “poetry has a particular way of sustaining and healing our souls by serving as a tool of resistance, helping to capture our current realities and imagine new realities and identities into existence” (p. 313). The many poetic techniques and structures provide ample room for students to find the form that works best for them. Poetry has also been shown to be an excellent outlet for those struggling with mental illness. There is research to support that “the process of writing for self, specifically writing poetry, is therapeutic as it relieves depression, decreases disordered eating, and increases self-confidence” (Schreuder, 2022, p. 521). Providing students with safe ways to express their feelings can help them feel witnessed, appreciated, and much less alone. When struggling students feel less alone, they are more likely to reach out for help and to hold out hope that their struggles are not forever. High

school students are the perfect candidates for learning poetry as “adolescents find poetry writing a safe way to express feelings and [find] that the arts may open a way for adults to listen to young people.” (Alexander, 1990, p. 126).

Students will also be tasked to workshop and share their poetry with their peers. Incorporating group work and sharing “involves encouragement, constructive criticism, trust, mastery, and feelings of competence. This then leads to an outcome of improved well-being in the form of worth, self-esteem, clear identity, and confidence” (Jensen & Blair, 1997, p. 529). Students will gain confidence in their writing abilities, leading to increased self-esteem in all aspects of their life. The poetry writing in this unit will consist of writing in response to mentor texts that explore different poetic structures, workshopping a poem of their choosing, and creating and sharing a final collection of poetry. I believe that students must get exposed to a variety of poetic forms to understand poetic devices and the expressive power of poetry. Students can then choose a form that works best for them and practice writing, workshopping, and sharing a poem that fits their chosen form. I hope this process will help students gain academic skills related to literary and writing and skills related to emotional processing and regulation. Also, I want to provide an outlet for students who may need to express and share their pain and struggles, similar to how I used poetry in high school.

An important note about providing space for student expression of trauma: I will emphasize at the beginning of the course or unit that, as an educator, I am a mandated reporter. I will communicate to students before they write the types of topics (like harm to oneself or others) which would prompt mandatory reporter status. I do not want any students to be blindsided if I must take steps based on information they have disclosed in their writing. While this may discourage some students from self-disclosure, “students might still turn in personal



writing about such topics as a way of alerting a caring teacher and getting the help that they struggle to ask for” (Griffith, 2018, p. 110). Thus, before the start of the unit, I will connect with guidance counselors to make sure any students needing help get the support they need.

Regarding the moral responsibility that comes with encouraging this sort of expression, there is a debate about whether the classroom should even be the environment for these topics. Some might argue that writing that addresses trauma and the emotions and struggles accompanying it should not be in the classroom. One might argue that the harsh realities of loss, pain, and struggle should be shielded from young people for as long as possible. However, this argument fails to recognize that tragedy is an unavoidable experience, and many students see much of it in their young lives. Thus, “to not teach narratives dealing with trauma and tragedy is to negate the voices of the very students we interact with, and it further perpetuates the silences we want our students to break” (Lee, 2021, p. 29). It is our duty as educators to recognize and respect students’ realities and let our teaching be guided by what our students need. This is not to say that all students should be required to write about their traumatic experiences. As Dutro (2011) eloquently states, “sharing hard times is not, should never be, a requirement for students. My contention, however, is that difficult experiences do enter our classrooms. Therefore, it is incumbent on literacy educators to pay attention to how those experiences function for us and our students” (p. 208). Students should always have the option to not write about something traumatic or challenging. However, we also need space for those who need a safe environment to unpack and process the dark realities that often get silenced in educational spaces. To emphasize that my classroom is a safe environment for emotional unpacking, I will be writing alongside my students. I will be expressing my own emotions in writing and sharing it with the class in hopes

of creating a more equal classroom relationship based on reciprocal vulnerability, in which my own vulnerability encourages the vulnerability of my students (Dutro, 2011).

Creative writing instruction is naturally a cross-cultural practice because its flexible nature makes space for all students of all backgrounds. There is a history of poetry for empowerment that demonstrates how creative writing can give a voice to those who are often silenced. As Baxley and Sealey-Ruiz (2021) explain, “poetry has historically been leveraged as a tool of protest, helping to capture current realities and imagine new ones into existence” (p. 311). They advocate for poetry to be taught in schools because of the power and history of poetry in the Black Radical Tradition. However, the ability of poetry to empower minoritized individuals is not limited to a specific group. Instead, the instruction of poetry, and creative writing as a whole, can provide a platform for voicing that is not often afforded to minoritized students in schools. Unfortunately, writing instruction in schools often silences minority students because “the dominant language and literacy of school is rooted in an uncritical and almost universal acceptance of white, Eurocentric norms embedded in notions around what makes writing ‘good’ or what constitutes writing ‘quality’” (NCTE, 2022). Creative writing allows for a more flexible definition of “good” writing and celebrates the “cultural and linguistic assets” that every student brings to the classroom (NCTE, 2018). Students will also be encouraged to express themselves however they prefer in their freewriting, with no policing of their language or dialect. While more polished pieces may have guidelines, they will still afford students plenty of flexibility to honor how they would best like to express themselves. No manner of expression will be valued over another, and the multiliteracies that students bring to the classroom will be honored and utilized within that space.

In my creative writing instruction, I will use mentor texts that exhibit writing that would not traditionally fit into what is considered traditional academic writing. These mentor texts will consist of poetry from diverse authors throughout history and the modern day. It is important that students are exposed to a diverse selection of texts to normalize and establish the validity of varying writing practices, literacies, and language attitudes. It is also crucial that all students are able to find representation and see themselves within the mentor texts to “allow them to envision the kind of writer they can be” (Thompson & Reed, 2019). These mentor texts provide a model students can emulate or take inspiration from. They will “serve as an example of good writing for student writers” and help students practice reading as writers (Thompson & Reed, 2019). Students will gain important skills and tools to apply to their writing by studying and discussing these texts. In order to provide a diverse selection of mentor texts, the list of texts must be flexible. Students will be encouraged to search for their own mentor texts and add them to a class list as a resource for all students. In addition, I may recommend a particular text to a student if it aligns with a topic or craft feature that the student is focused on. For that reason, the list of possible mentor texts (see Appendix C) is non-exhaustive and cannot be fully represented by a preset list.

In addition to the mentor texts written by established writers, I will use my own writing as a kind of mentor text. As previously mentioned, I will write alongside my students to create a student-teacher relationship based on reciprocal vulnerability. I will use this writing in several minilessons to demonstrate how to workshop one’s own writing. Thus, my own writing will serve as a more tangible mentor text that changes and grows along with students’ writing.

The applicability of a creative writing unit for adolescents is evident in the emotional turmoil often associated with this period of life. According to Mental Health America, over 1 in

10 youth in the U.S. experience depression that severely impairs their ability to function in all aspects of their life. In addition, “only 28% of the nation’s youth with severe depression receive some consistent treatment [while] 57.3% of youth with severe depression do not receive any care” (Reinert et al., 2022). These statistics indicate a clear pattern of mental health issues among America’s youth and a lack of support and treatment in response to this issue. While not a substitute for medical treatment or therapy, addressing these issues in the classroom rather than pretending they do not exist is a way to help students feel less alone and comfortable being vulnerable in the classroom. Educators need to recognize that adolescence is a difficult time for many students and that those difficulties can affect their lives inside and outside school. Approaching teaching from this perspective can help “make students feel comfortable expressing themselves in their classrooms and seeing those classrooms as spaces for vulnerability and personal growth” (Sandbäck Forsell et al., 2021, p. 157). For the reasons previously stated, creative writing instruction can aid these efforts and work to make school “a place where adolescents can express themselves and talk about their difficulties” (Alexander, 1990, p. 130). Creative writing is also a beneficial practice for this specific age group, as creative writing allows students to explore themselves and construct their sense of self. This process is of the utmost importance during adolescence. Emunah (1990) explains that “the process of creation strengthens the adolescent ego when the adolescent takes hold of inner feelings, impulses, and turmoil and, through his or her own resources, gives this inner material aesthetic shape and form” (p. 104). Creative writing, more so than traditional academic writing, provides the ownership and freedom in the creative process that students need (King, 2015). Thus, incorporating the creativity and expression involved in creative writing into an ELA classroom allows for self-expression and identity formation, which is critical during adolescence.

The skills students will practice through the creative writing curriculum, such as expressing emotions, establishing and maintaining a supportive classroom community, and formulating one's identity, are all skills associated with social and emotional learning (SEL). SEL can be defined as the acquisition and application of "knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to manage their emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013, as cited in Mahoney et al., 2018). Emphasizing SEL practices in the classroom is a pedagogical strategy that is especially important for adolescents. At this age, SEL competencies are of the utmost importance as students deal with complex emotions and feelings, new responsibilities, and increased social pressures. Incorporating social-emotional learning strategies and being transparent about them shows students that their emotions are significant and valuable for learning and that SEL can yield stronger academic understanding (Coleman, 2021). Many of the SEL skills can be practiced and improved through creative writing practices. For instance, the freewriting that I plan to incorporate into every lesson encourages students to reflect on their emotions which can lead to emotional regulation. Those who can regulate their emotions "perform well in school, experience fewer behavior problems, and manage stressful situations more effectively" (Tsatsou-Nikolouli, 2020, p. 175). In addition, the written self-disclosure involved in freewriting "allows [for] careful and detailed problem identification and problem generation, making problem-solving much easier" (Kaufman & Kaufman, 2009, p. 184). It is clear that SEL skills can be fostered through creative writing curricula and that this aids students with identity formation, emotional regulation, and social consciousness – all of which can help support the mental well-being of students.

While all students can benefit greatly from creative writing instruction, this type of writing can be especially beneficial for English Language Learners (ELLs). While schools so often marginalize ELL students, creative writing instruction can foster a more inclusive classroom environment. Due to the flexibility and creativity involved in this type of writing, students can develop their voices as individuals without worrying as much about conventions and mechanics. This approach to teaching frames the English language as “a threshold for expression and exploration, liberating rather than silencing, expanding and emerging rather than constricting and marginalizing” (Litten, 2022, p. 401). We want to encourage ELL students to want to explore and use the English language to express themselves. We do not want them to feel marginalized or criticized for their lack of fluency. One of the steps I will take to create such a learning environment is allowing ELLs to complete their freewriting in their preferred language. Because the purpose of freewriting is to express one’s emotions and process experiences, it does not matter what language this occurs in. While more formal writing tasks may require them to write in English, the great thing about creative writing is that it allows for flexibility in language. For example, a piece could be written using non-English dialogue or a specific dialect that is more familiar to the student. The goal is for the student to feel supported in their language-learning journey and to see learning English as an opportunity to express themselves creatively. Creative writing also offers opportunities to write about personal topics, creating an authentic connection between their language use and their identity construction (Litten, 2022). These authentic connections will also foster confidence in an ELL student’s language skills, which is supported further by the fact that “creative writing aids language development at all levels: grammar, vocabulary, phonology and discourse” (Tok & Kandemir, 2015, p. 1636). The measurable improvements to one’s language abilities will only improve their language

confidence and support them in their language-learning journey. Overall, the implementation of creative writing curricula can support English language learners as they encounter the difficulty and demands of the ELA classroom.

While I have argued extensively for the emotional and developmental benefits of creative writing instruction, it is important to highlight the academic merit of a creative writing curriculum. In their position statement on Writing Instruction in School, NCTE (2022) states that educators should “advocate for writing instruction that is process- (rather than product-) oriented.” As mentioned previously, the freewriting that will take place in my classroom will be solely about the act of writing rather than the product produced. In addition, the writing workshop model prioritizes the process of writing over the product. The workshop model also emphasizes the importance of feedback for growth, which is a guiding principle for teaching writing (NCTE, 2018). Creative writing also supports the Pennsylvania English Language Arts standards. By having students read, discuss, and analyze mentor texts, my curriculum aligns itself with two ‘Reading Literature’ standards (CC.1.3.11–12.D and CC.1.3.11–12.F). In addition, the writing involved in the unit will also satisfy several ‘Writing’ standards (CC.1.4.11–12.E, and CC.1.4.11–12.Q). The unit as a whole involves routine and habitual writing, satisfying CC.1.4.11–12.X. Overall, through the creation of a writing community that centers the writing process and its authentic applications, my curriculum supports established academic standards while also centering the students’ well-being in and outside of the classroom.

## Chapter 2

### Unit Overview

In this unit, students will read a selection of poetry that demonstrate how these forms can be used to express and process emotions. Students will study craft features and literary forms and analyze how these are used to portray mood and emotion. Students will then apply this understanding and these skills to their own creative work. In this chapter, you will find my unit UBD and a daily calendar, which preview the unit learning objectives and content.

#### Figure 1

##### *Unit UBD Plan*

<p><b>Curricular Area:</b> ELA  <b>Grade:</b> 11  <b>Unit Title:</b> Creative Writing for Well-Being  <b>Estimated time frame:</b> 20 classes  <b>Class Length:</b> 80 minutes</p>	
<p><u>PA State Standards</u>          CC.1.3.11–12.D Evaluate how an author’s point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.          CC.1.3.11–12.F Evaluate how words and phrases shape meaning and tone in texts.          CC.1.4.11–12.E Write with an awareness of the stylistic aspects of composition.          CC.1.4.11–12.Q Write with an awareness of the stylistic aspects of writing.          CC.1.4.11–12.X Write routinely over extended time frames and shorter time frames for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.</p> <p><u>Teaching Tolerance Social Justice Standards</u>          ID.9-12.4 I express pride and confidence in my identity without perceiving or treating anyone else as inferior.          DI.9-12.6 I interact comfortably and respectfully with all people, whether they are similar to or different from me.</p>	<p><u>Guiding Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can writing about emotions or personal events help one process them?</li> <li>• How does writing habitually affect writing self-confidence, stamina, and skill?</li> <li>• How do writers employ craft features (including metaphor, simile, imagery, personification) to shape the meaning and mood of texts?</li> <li>• How can I use the tools in a writer’s toolbox to communicate meaning in my own writing?</li> </ul>



<p>DI.9-12.9 I relate to and build connections with other people by showing them empathy, respect and understanding, regardless of our similarities or differences.</p>	
<p>Students will know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theme</li> <li>• Tone</li> <li>• Mood</li> <li>• Symbol</li> <li>• Figurative language (metaphor, simile, imagery, personification)</li> </ul>	<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uphold a positive and encouraging classroom climate in which students feel supported.</li> <li>• Show a willingness to consider and elaborate on others' ideas or viewpoints.</li> <li>• Interact purposefully, confidently, and respectfully in a variety of situations.</li> <li>• Acknowledge views that differ from their own and reassess their own viewpoints.</li> <li>• Build writing fluency and stamina by writing daily for 15 minutes in their writing journals</li> <li>• Annotate and analyze a given piece of writing for theme, tone, mood, etc.</li> <li>• Consistently consider more than one interpretation of the communications that they read, view, and listen to</li> <li>• Demonstrate pride and satisfaction in using language to formulate and express personal positions</li> </ul>
<p><u>Performance Tasks</u>  Writing Journals  Poetry Performance  Poetry Portfolio</p>	<p><u>Formative Assessment Evidence</u>  Annotations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annotating mentor texts during minilessons to demonstrate engagement.</li> </ul> Participation in discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging in discussions of mentor texts.</li> </ul> Participation in Writer's Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are engaged during workshop discussions and show receptiveness to feedback.</li> </ul> Growth between drafts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate a willingness to learn from mistakes and grow.</li> </ul> </p>

**Figure 2***Unit Calendar*

<b>Day 1</b>	<b>Day 2</b>	<b>Day 3</b>	<b>Day 4</b>	<b>Day 5</b>
Unit Introduction	Teaching point: Facing a blank page.  Teaching point: How to enjoy reading a poem.	Teaching point: How to annotate a poem.  Teaching point: Starting with what you know.	Teaching point: Using your peers to enhance your understanding.	Teaching point: Thinking about mentor texts as a model.
<b>Day 6</b>	<b>Day 7</b>	<b>Day 8</b>	<b>Day 9</b>	<b>Day 10</b>
Teaching point: Appreciating the musicality of poetry.	Teaching point: Using poetry performances as models.  Teaching point: Getting started by not worrying about being poetic.	Teaching point: Using your own words to create poetry.  Teaching point: How to engage in a writer's workshop.	Teaching point: The power of using metaphor as a writer.  Teaching point: How to give constructive feedback.	<b><i>Journal Check-In</i></b>  Teaching point: Removing unnecessary adjectives/adverbs.  Teaching point: The power of pausing.
<b>Day 11</b>	<b>Day 12</b>	<b>Day 13</b>	<b>Day 14</b>	<b>Day 15</b>
<b><i>Poetry Performances</i></b>  Teaching point: How to be an active listener.	<b><i>Poetry Performances</i></b>	Teaching point: Making a poem from a journal entry.	Teaching point: Writing about abstract ideas.	Teaching point: How line breaks change the rhythm of a poem.  Teaching point: Experimenting with verbs to make your poem more interesting.
<b>Day 16</b>	<b>Day 17</b>	<b>Day 18</b>	<b>Day 19</b>	<b>Day 20</b>
Teaching point: Changing the way a poem looks can change its impact.	Teaching point: Avoiding using clichés in poetry.	Start compiling portfolio	Portfolio reflection Teacher conferences	<b><i>Journal Check-In</i></b> Teacher conferences <b><i>Finish &amp; Submit Portfolios!</i></b>

## Chapter 3

### Performance Tasks

In this chapter, you will find the assignments that I will be using to assess students' understanding and engagement. These assessments, along with various formative tasks, will determine the grade that students will receive.

#### Writing Journals

In an effort to have students practice habitual expressive writing, I will provide writing journals that will be utilized every day. Students will be given 15 minutes to free-write in their writing journals at the start of every class. Students will be provided with a bank of freewriting prompts to help them get started (see Appendix C). While this is a low-pressure task, students will be held accountable for completing journal entries for each day they are present in class. There will be a journal check (purely for completion) halfway through the unit and another one at the end. Both journal checks will be worth 5 points, with points being deducted if there are missing entries.

#### Poetry Performance

The goal of the poetry performance task is to have students write and perform for an audience larger than the instructor. In having students share their poetry with their peers, I hope that the classroom can become an important place for voicing and validation. If students can witness their peers' emotions and struggles, they may not feel as alone in their own hardships. In

sharing their poetry in a supportive environment, students experience “encouragement, constructive criticism, trust, mastery, and feelings of competence” (Jensen and Blair, 1997, p. 529). The goal of this task is for students to express themselves through both writing and speaking and to give them the platform to communicate their creativity and emotion with others. In accordance with this goal, the scoring of these performances will give more weight to the spoken delivery of the poem than the literary merit of the poem itself (see Appendix B). Flexibility and affordances will be given to those who struggle with public speaking anxiety that may impact their ability to perform their poem.

### **Poetry Portfolio**

The goal of this unit is for students to practice writing as a skill for processing emotions and establishing a strong sense of self. Therefore, the grading of their writing will not focus on conventions or a certain number of literary devices. Instead, the focus will be on what they learned about themselves through their writing process and how their emotional and academic growth is demonstrated in their writing. To capture this, students will compile their writing from the unit into a physical writing portfolio that will count as their summative task. Through this portfolio, students will demonstrate their understanding of poetic forms and their own personal journey with the writing they have done in class (see Appendix B).

To capture each student’s development and growth effectively and thoroughly (both in their writing abilities and in their well-being), students will complete a reflection as part of their portfolio assignment. This reflection piece will be a significant portion of their summative grade in an effort to emphasize that creative writing for emotional expression is about the journey and

how it makes you feel rather than the finished pieces. This reflection will ask students to express their feelings about the unit as a whole and how the writing that they have done has impacted them. They will also discuss how their portfolio and how they have organized their pieces in it demonstrates their growth as writers and human beings. Finally, they will include an explanation for each piece in the portfolio and how it reflects their emotions and personal experiences.

## Chapter 4

### Daily Lessons

In this chapter, you will find lesson outlines for each day of the unit. These outlines provide details on the pacing and content on the unit, while being flexible enough for different teaching styles and responsive teaching.

#### Day 1: Unit Introduction

1. (2 minutes) Attendance, Housekeeping
2. (10 minutes) Introduction to the unit
  - a. I will discuss the purpose of the unit (as discussed in my rationale) and my personal experience with creative writing and how that has influenced my creation of the unit.
  - b. I will also encourage an open discussion about my experiences and how I believe that creative writing is a fantastic tool for emotional expression. In this discussion, I will use my personal experience as well as the extensive data (as discussed in my rationale) that supports creative writing instruction.
  - c. I will also explain that I am going to be doing all the writing that they are doing along with them. This is, in part, to establish a more equal teacher-student relationship.
3. (20 minutes) Introduce Writing Journal Assignment
  - a. *Teaching point: How to get started in your writing journal.*
  - b. After introducing the unit, I will move into the positive effects of expressive writing and how the students will be doing this writing in their journals.
  - c. I will discuss the intention of this assignment (as discussed in my rationale) and how I plan to grade them for this assignment (the two checkpoints for completion). I will also mention that I will not be going through and reading all their entries but rather just skimming for evidence that they completed the assignment.
  - d. Here, I will also take the time to explain my status as a mandated reporter and what that means. I will emphasize that this is a space for expressing and processing tough emotions but that I am responsible for protecting them by reporting under certain circumstances.
  - e. I will then give a minilesson on facing the blank page by writing whatever pops into your head as you are thinking it. Students will then be given 15 minutes to complete their first journal entry.
4. (5 minutes) Introduce Performance Tasks
  - a. Before moving on, I will quickly go over the other performance tasks for the unit: the poetry performance and final portfolio. Students will be given access to an assignment sheet that describes these tasks in more detail.
5. (8 minutes) What is Poetry?

- a. I will then shift into an introductory slideshow that will give them a cursory understanding of poetry, how it differs from prose, and how it can be used for personal expression.
  - b. I will then explain that we will be doing a fun poetry activity to ease ourselves into the unit and get to know each other better.
6. (35 minutes) Bio Poem
- a. I will introduce the format of the bio poem by sharing my own bio poem.
  - b. After sharing my poem, I will allow the students to ask me questions. I will invite them to critique my piece using a list of provided sentence stems. I will do this to let them know that they will critique each other throughout the class and that constructive critiques are part of the writing process.
  - c. Then, I will put a blank poem template on the board and give each student a piece of paper. Then, I will give them 15 minutes to work on their bio poem.
  - d. After the students finish their poems, I will ask them to hang them on the wall. We will then proceed to have a gallery walk. Students will silently walk around, reading each other's work. They will be given 3 post-its to leave feedback and observations on other poems. They will be directed to focus on the positives for this critique and to use the provided sentence starters. They will be asked to use all 3 post-its, each on a different poem.

### **Day 2: How to Read a Poem & Poem Discussion**

1. (2 minutes) Attendance, Housekeeping
2. (20 minutes) Journal Writing  
*Teaching point: Facing a blank page.*
  - a. Students will be given 15 minutes to write in their journals. Before they begin to write, I will give another minilesson on facing the blank page by starting with little nearby things.
3. (30 minutes) Reading Poetry Minilesson  
*Teaching point: How to enjoy reading a poem.*
  - a. I will give a minilesson on how to read a poem using Maya Angelou's "[Caged Bird](#)". This minilesson will focus on just enjoying a poem and thinking about what it makes you feel. The goal with this lesson is to teach students that poetry is not solely about mechanics and figurative language, but how it makes the reader feel. Thus, I will be emphasizing reading poetry to appreciate it, not to analyze it.
4. (20 minutes) Poetry Discussion
  - a. After demonstrating how to just feel a poem and not analyzing it, I will facilitate small group discussions on how the poem made students feel. I will also ask them to discuss what about the poem made them feel this way.
  - b. As a discussion exit ticket, I will ask student to write on a piece of paper 3 words to describe how the poem made them feel and one idea that a peer brought up that they thought was interesting.

### **Day 3: Annotating a Poem & Writing Time**

1. (2 minutes) Attendance, Housekeeping
2. (15 minutes) Journal Writing
3. (30 minutes) Annotation Minilesson

*Teaching point: How to annotate a poem.*

- a. I will give a minilesson on how to annotate a poem in rounds (see Appendix A)
  - b. At the end of this minilesson, students will be asked to think-pair-share about this strategy and if they found it helpful.
  - c. This minilesson will give students a strategy to use when reading any poem.
  - d. I will collect their annotated poems at the end of the minilesson to assess their understanding of the strategy and reteach any gaps later.
4. (30 minutes) Writing Time

*Teaching point: Starting with what you know.*

- a. The rest of class will be an opportunity for students to start trying to write poetry of their own. I will start with a minilesson of getting started by writing about what you know. Students can then choose to use this strategy or use something else to get writing.
- b. Halfway through this writing time, I will have the students take a stretch break. I will suggest that if they are stuck or frustrated that they switch gears and try something else for the last 15 minutes of class.

#### **Day 4: Poetry Reading Stations**

1. (2 minutes) Attendance, Housekeeping
2. (15 minutes) Journal Writing
  - a. For this journal writing session, I will ask students to fold their notebook paper over so that they only have half of the page to write on. I will explain that this is a good way to force yourself to break up your lines of text to practice line breaks in poetry.
3. (60 minutes) Poetry Stations

*Teaching point: Using your peers to enhance your understanding.*

- a. Students will be divided into 4 groups and each group will be at a table with copies of a poem and a large piece of paper with the poem's title written in the center.
  - i. The poems chosen for this task are "Main Na Bhoolunga" by Fatimah Asghar, "Late Summer after a Panic Attack" by Ada Limón, "kitchenette building" by Gwendolyn Brooks, and "Mother to Son" by Langston Hughes.
  - ii. These poems were chosen because they vary greatly in structure and theme from one another to demonstrate the variety that the poetic form provides. They also are varied in the author's identity and time period.
- b. Students will have roughly 10 minutes to read the poem and, as a group, use the piece of paper to create a mind map discussing the poem's themes, structure, and mood.
- c. After the time is up, the groups will rotate to another table with a different poem. They will then add to the mind map. This will continue until all groups have read all the poems.
- d. Students will then be given 5 minutes to walk around to view the completed mind maps.



- e. Before leaving class, students will complete an exit ticket asking them what their favorite poem was and why and one thing about that poem that someone else added to the mind map that either expanded or contradicted their interpretation.

### **Day 5: Mentor Text Exploration & Writing Practice**

1. (2 minutes) Attendance, Housekeeping
2. (15 minutes) Journal Writing
3. (30 minutes) Mentor Text Exploration

*Teaching point: Thinking about mentor texts as a model.*

- a. I will first reiterate what a mentor text is and how it can help the writing process. I will direct students to the bank of mentor texts I have compiled (see Appendix C). They will then be directed to a shared Google Doc containing a blank table, set up like my mentor text bank.
  - b. Students will then be given time to explore the internet to find poems they enjoy that I have not included on my list. They will be asked to attach the title, author, link to the poem, and their reason for selecting it in the table.
4. (30 minutes) Writing Time
    - a. For the rest of class, I will ask students to select one poem from either bank to use as a guide for them to write a poem. I will ask them to identify one aspect of the poem (themes, structure, diction, rhyme scheme) that they will use as a model for their own poem. They will then be given the remainder of the class to write this poem.

### **Day 6: Poetry & Music**

1. (2 minutes) Attendance, Housekeeping
2. (15 minutes) Journal Writing
3. (45 minutes) Poetry & Music Activity

*Teaching point: Appreciating the musicality of poetry.*

- a. I will first discuss the similarities between poetry and music lyrics and how the line between them is often blurred. I will use examples of Bob Dylan's lyrics and poems to illustrate my point. After students understand the connection between music and poetry, I will transition into the activity.
- b. Students will work in pairs for this activity. They will choose a song to annotate like a poem. They can choose any song, but it must be clean and not reference anything inappropriate. They will print out the lyrics to their song. Then, they will annotate the lyrics in rounds using the annotation technique taught on Day 2. The hope is that students will grasp how lyricists often use figurative language and poetic devices, just like poets. On the back of their lyric sheet, they will answer the following questions that will be posted on the board:
  - i. What is the song about? What does the title have to do with the song?
  - ii. What message is the song trying to convey to the listener?
  - iii. What poetic sound devices can you find? Write the lines that you find each device in and explain.
  - iv. What two figurative devices (metaphor, simile, personification) can you find in the lyrics? Write the lines and explain each one.

- v. Are the lyrics written as lines of poetry? If not, how would you break the lines into lines of poetry?
  - c. I will then bring the students back together and open the floor to any pair who would like to share what they learned or how they answered one of the questions.
  - d. I will conclude this activity by showing the video [Nathaniel Mackey: The music of poetry](#) to demonstrate how poets today are inspired by music in their poetry writing.
4. (15 minutes) Introducing Poetry Performance
- a. I will introduce the poetry performance task and explain its purpose during the remainder of class time.
  - b. Students will have the remainder of the class to brainstorm and start working on their poems.

### Day 7: Performance Poetry

1. (2 minutes) Attendance, Housekeeping
2. (15 minutes) Journal Writing
3. (30 minutes) Poetry as Performance

*Teaching point: Using poetry performances as models.*

- a. I will use a presentation to introduce students to performance and slam poetry. I will show them videos of performances. As I show them the videos, students will take notes on how the speaker presents their poem. I will tell them to pay attention to cadence, volume, facial expressions, and posture.
    - i. The videos I will show are Patrick Roche performing [“Couples Therapy”](#), Andrea Gibson performing [“What Do You Think About the Weather”](#), Sabrina Benaim performing [“Explaining My Depression to My Mother”](#), and Darius Simpson performing [“Okay So Maybe the Rally Won't Set Us Free”](#).
  - b. After showing all the videos, I will open a discussion on the performances. The class will use their notes to talk about how to perform a poem and what makes a poetry performance impactful. As we discuss, I will write important points up on the board.
4. (30 minutes) Writing Time
- Teaching point: Getting started by not worrying about being poetic.*
- a. I will start with a minilesson on getting started by not worrying about your writing sounding poetic. I will emphasize that when you first start writing poetry, you don't have to worry about "style," about writing in a "beautiful" or a "poetic" way. I will model writing plainly about an experience using poetic form but not worrying about style.
  - b. Students will have the remainder of class to work on their poems for the performance. They can use the important points from the discussion and both banks of mentor texts to help them. I will also be available to help any student with brainstorming or getting started writing.
  - c. I will ask that students come to the next class with some semblance of a rough draft to participate in the writer's workshop.

### Day 8: Writer's Workshop

1. (2 minutes) Attendance, Housekeeping
2. (15 minutes) Journal Writing
3. (15 minutes) Found Poem Minilesson  
*Teaching point: Using your own words to create poetry.*
  - a. Using my own journal, I will model how to make a found poem out of a journal entry. I will ask students to select which journal entry they would like to make into a found poem and to try it out with just a few lines. If they like the strategy, they can continue during their writing time.
4. (35 minutes) Writer's Workshop & Writing Time  
*Teaching point: How to engage in a writer's workshop.*
  - a. First, I will introduce the writer's workshop model and how it will function in the classroom. I will explain that the workshop is intended to emphasize the importance of the writing process rather than just the product.
  - b. For most of the class, students will work independently on their poetry performances. I will also mention that they can work on other poems if they have an idea that does not quite fit into their poem for performance.
  - c. As students work, I will visit individual students at their desks to confer with them. I will ask what they are working on and how it is going. Based on where they are in the writing process, I will give tailored feedback to keep them on the right track or steer them in the right direction. Students will be given the agency to request that I come back at a different time if they are in the middle of something or do not want to be interrupted.
5. (10 minutes) Conclusion
  - a. In the last 10 minutes of class, I will speak to the whole class about any patterns I noticed while workshopping. These will be one or two things that seem to be occurring across the board for students. I will talk about what these patterns are and what changes I suggest. I will suggest that students note these changes before the end of class, so they do not forget.

### **Day 9: Workshopping & Peer Work**

1. (2 minutes) Attendance, Housekeeping
2. (15 minutes) Journal Writing
3. (15 minutes) Metaphor Minilesson  
*Teaching point: The power of using metaphor as a writer.*
  - a. I will use my own writing to demonstrate how to use metaphors to deepen writing and convey emotions.
  - b. I will have students try this out with their poems or write something new if they do not want to change what they have.
4. (15 minutes) Writer's Workshop
  - a. Students will be given more time to work independently as I continue to workshop with students that I did not get to the previous class.
5. (20 minutes) Peer Work  
*Teaching point: How to give constructive feedback.*
  - a. Students will choose partners and take turns reading their poems out loud to each other.

- b. After they both read their poems, the students will complete a review worksheet (see Appendix C)
  - c. Students will then trade back poems and have time to read the worksheet. Students can ask for clarification about any of the comments.
6. (13 minutes) Applying Feedback
- a. Students will have the remainder of class to make any changes to their poems.

### Day 10: Revision & Performance Prep

1. (2 minutes) Attendance, Housekeeping
2. (15 minutes) Journal Writing
  - a. Journals will be collected for the mid-unit check-in. They will be returned the following class.
3. (10 minutes) Revision Minilesson
 

*Teaching point: Removing unnecessary adjectives/adverbs.*

  - a. I will use my own writing to demonstrate how to eliminate adjectives and adverbs that are clogging up a poem.
  - b. I will have students try this with one of their fully drafted poems.
  - c. I will then have them reflect on how it went with the person sitting next to them.
4. (15 minutes) Performance Minilesson
 

*Teaching point: The power of pausing.*

  - a. I will begin with a minilesson on taking purposeful pauses while reading poetry to add to the performance. I will share a poem with students, first allowing them to read it, then performing it for them. I will ask them to indicate where I took pauses and how this affected the mood of the poem. I will then suggest that they try this while practicing their performances.
5. (30 minutes) Work on Preparing Performance Pieces
  - a. Students will have most of the class to prepare for the poetry performances that will be occurring over the next two classes. I will recommend that they print out their poem before practicing their performance of it.
  - b. Students can go out into the hallway to practice saying their poems aloud. I will also emphasize that this is the time to practice any gestures or changes in cadence. They should write notes on the poem as a reminder to include those performance pieces.
6. (5 minutes) Introduce Sharing Norms
  - a. Towards the end of class, I will bring all the students back together to review norms and appropriate behavior for the performances. I will stress the importance of being an accepting and receptive audience. I will also emphasize how difficult it can be to share your emotions like this, so the students should be proud of themselves. I will also open it up to students to add any additional norms, which will be written on the board.

### Day 11: Poetry Performances

1. (5 minutes) Attendance, Housekeeping
  - a. Students will help me arrange the chairs, so the room is set up like an open mic at a cafe. I will bring in hot chocolate/pastries for the students.
2. (15 minutes) Journal Writing

3. (5 minutes) Norms Review & Audience Responses  
*Teaching point: How to be an active listener.*
  - a. I will quickly review the norms we established in the previous class. I will also review how to be an active listener.
  - b. I will also hand out notecards for audience responses. For each performance, students in the audience will write 2 Glows (positive observations) that will be collected and given to the speaker during the debrief.
4. (55 minutes) Poetry Performances
  - a. Students will have already filled out a table that lists the order they will present. I will call students up, they will perform their poems, and they will get snaps from everyone. This will continue for the rest of the class period.
  - b. I will be sitting in the back of the classroom taking notes on the performances which I will include when I give them the graded rubric.

### **Day 12: Poetry Performances**

1. (2 minutes) Attendance, Housekeeping
2. (15 minutes) Journal Writing
3. (30 minutes) Poetry Performances
  - a. We will continue where we left off with the poetry performances, as they will not all fit into one class period.
  - b. The amount of time this will take depends on how many students still must perform.
4. (15 minutes) Performance Reflection
  - a. Students will be asked to reflect on their performance through a written reflection. The reflection will ask students to discuss:
    - i. How their performance went.
    - ii. What they would change if they could do it again.
    - iii. At least 3 strengths of the performance and 1 area for improvement.
    - iv. How it felt to share personal emotions and experiences with their peers.
  - b. Students can work independently on their other poems if there is any extra time at the end of class.

### **Day 13: Performance Debrief & Poetry Work Stations**

1. (2 minutes) Attendance, Housekeeping
2. (15 minutes) Journal Writing
3. (20 minutes) Performance Debrief
  - a. Students will be seated in a large circle. They will lead a discussion on the poetry performances. I will help by providing guiding questions. I will also suggest that they use their reflections as material for the discussion.
  - b. This discussion aims to foster open communication about their experiences and how they did or did not support them emotionally.
4. (40 minutes) Station Work
  - a. We will then be moving on to working on the other poems that are going to be a part of the final portfolio. Students are required to include at least 3 poems in their portfolio, with at least 2 of those being a page or longer. Students are also encouraged to include more than the required number if they would like.

b. Getting Started Minilesson

*Teaching point: Making a poem from a journal entry.*

- i. I will use my own journal writing to demonstrate how to select an entry (written in prose) that I can turn into a poem. I will then circle the parts of the entry that I want to be sure to go into my poem. Then, I will make a list with the things that I have circled.
  - ii. I will ask students to go through their notebook and select an entry that they would like to make into a poem. They will have the option to complete the rest of the steps during the station work.
- c. Students will choose to sit at any of the three stations. The stations will be explained to them:
- i. Station 1: Independent writing time – For trying out the minilesson strategy or working on any other poems.
  - ii. Station 2: Teacher conference – For workshopping your poems with me.
  - iii. Station 3: Peer Editing – Swap paper with someone and give them constructive feedback.
    1. There will be peer review worksheets (see Day 9) available.
- d. The individual student needs different things based on where they are in their writing process. The student will be able to select the station that fits their needs with the flexibility to move stations as they progress.
- e. Students will sign up for a station on the board and can move their name if they move stations. I will use the list of names for Station 2 to call students up to my desk to conference.

### Day 14: Workshopping Poems

1. (2 minutes) Attendance, Housekeeping
2. (15 minutes) Journal Writing
3. (20 minutes) Writing Poetry Minilesson
 

*Teaching point: Writing about abstract ideas.*

  - a. I will give a minilesson on writing about abstract ideas using the metaphor of writing about wind. I will explain that you cannot see the wind, but you can see the way it impacts things that are visible. I will explain that abstract ideas like Love and Death don't look, sound, or smell like anything, but they affect everything around them. It is those effects that you want to describe in your writing. I will invite students to pick an abstract concept and try writing about it during the writer's workshop.
4. (30 minutes) Writer's Workshop
  - a. As students work, I will visit individual students at their desks to workshop with them. I will ask what they are working on and how it is going. Based on where they are in the writing process, I will give tailored feedback to keep them on the right track or steer them in the right direction. Students will be given the agency to request that I come back at a different time if they are in the middle of something or do not want to be interrupted.
5. (10 minutes) Conclusion
  - a. In the last 10 minutes of class, I will speak to the whole class about any patterns I noticed while workshopping. These will be one or two things that seem to be

occurring across the board for students. I will talk about what these patterns are and what changes I suggest. I will suggest that students note these changes before the end of class, so they do not forget.

### **Day 15: Line Breaks & Writing Time**

1. (2 minutes) Attendance, Housekeeping
2. (15 minutes) Journal Writing
3. (10 minutes) Enjambment Minilesson  
*Teaching point: How line breaks change the rhythm of a poem.*
  - a. I will use my own writing to demonstrate experimenting with enjambment and different line breaks.
  - b. I will have students try this by taking a poem they have written and moving a line break or two. They will then discuss with the person next to them the effect that this change has how their poem is read.
4. (15 minutes) Writing Time
  - a. Students will have 15 minutes of independent work time. They can test out moving more line breaks or work on whatever else they need to do.
5. (10 minutes) Break Time
6. (15 minutes) Writing Poetry Minilesson  
*Teaching point: Experimenting with verbs to make your poem more interesting.*
  - a. I will use my own writing to demonstrate how to make a poem more interesting by using interesting verbs. I will highlight all the verbs in the poem and go over each one to see if I can exchange it for a verb that is more interesting.
  - b. I will invite students to highlight the verbs in one of their poems. They can try to replace them with more interesting verbs during the independent work time.
7. (15 minutes) Writing Time
  - a. After the minilesson, we will transition into independent work time. Students will have the opportunity to try out the minilesson strategy or work on their poetry in any other way.

### **Day 16: Formatting & Writing Time**

1. (2 minutes) Attendance, Housekeeping
2. (15 minutes) Journal Writing
3. (10 minutes) Formatting Minilesson  
*Teaching point: Changing the way a poem looks can change its impact.*
  - a. I will use my own writing to demonstrate how to format a poem that you want to look a specific way on the page. I will have students play around with the formatting of one of their poems.
4. (50 minutes) Writing Time
  - a. Students will have the rest of class time to work independently on their poems. I will recommend that students identify the poems they want to use in their portfolio by the end of class (even if these poems are not finished yet).

### **Day 17: Revisions & Peer Reviews**

1. (2 minutes) Attendance, Housekeeping
2. (15 minutes) Journal Writing

3. (13 minutes) Revision Minilesson  
*Teaching point: Avoiding using clichés in poetry.*
  - a. I will use a poem that I wrote using clichés to demonstrate how they take away from the impact of a poem. I will then demonstrate how to change these so that they are original and express the unique qualities of my subject.
  - b. I will invite students to look over one or two of their poems to see if they have used any clichés and to change them to be original.
4. (30 minutes) Writing Time
  - a. Students will have the rest of class time to work independently on their poems.
  - b. I will also recommend that students review completed poems by reading them out loud to themselves or a peer. This is a great strategy for catching errors and making sure that the poem sounds how you intended it to.
5. (20 minutes) Peer Work
  - a. I will have students select the poem that they are not finished with or are not confident in certain aspects of it. As a review and revision strategy, students will choose partners and read this poem out loud to each other. The student listening will also be able to see the poem to review its formatting/structure.
  - b. After they both read their poems, the students will complete the peer review worksheet (see Appendix C)
  - c. Students will then trade back poems and have time to read the worksheet. Students can ask for clarification about any of the comments.

### **Day 18: Writer's Workshop**

1. (2 minutes) Attendance, Housekeeping
2. (15 minutes) Journal Writing
3. (60 minutes) Writer's Workshop
  - a. There is also flexibility built into this lesson if I feel that another minilesson on any specific topic would be beneficial for the whole group.
4. (5 minutes) Portfolio Assignment
  - a. I will review the portfolio assignment and all the required components. Students can ask any questions about the portfolio.
  - b. I will also discuss the importance of the order of the pieces in the portfolio.
  - c. At this time, I will hand out the report covers that will serve as their portfolios.
5. (13 minutes) Title Page
  - a. For a slight change of pace at the end of the class, I will be introducing the title page that is going to be a part of their final portfolio.
  - b. I will create my own title page along with the students to demonstrate how to format it.
  - c. Students will then have time to decide on the title of their portfolio.
6. (13 minutes) Table of Contents
  - a. I will create my own table of contents along with the students to demonstrate how to format it.
  - b. Students may change the order of their pieces after this, but they will still understand how to format the table of contents.

### **Day 19: Teacher Conferences & Portfolio Reflections**



1. (2 minutes) Attendance, Housekeeping
2. (15 minutes) Journal Writing
3. (60 minutes) Portfolio Reflection
  - a. I will discuss the requirements for the portfolio reflection. I will also discuss its purpose and how its importance translates to it being worth more points than the writing itself.
  - b. Students will be given time to complete their reflections. Teacher conferences will be happening simultaneously.
  - c. If students finish their reflections, they can work on printing out their pieces and arranging them in the portfolio. They can also write in their journals or read independently.
4. (60 minutes) Teacher Conferences
  - a. As students work on their reflections, I will be calling students up to my desk to conference about their experience with the unit. I will be doing this to gain a practical understanding of how my creative writing instruction helped students with their emotional development and well-being.

#### **Day 20: Teacher Conferences & Turning in Portfolios**

1. (2 minutes) Attendance, Housekeeping
2. (15 minutes) Journal Writing
  - a. Journals will be collected for the end-of-unit check-in. They will be returned the following class.
  - b. If journal writing is deemed successful and beneficial to students, it may continue as a part of other units of instruction.
3. (40 minutes) Teacher Conferences
  - a. I will continue conferencing with the students that I did not get to the previous class.
  - b. While I am conferencing, students will have the opportunity to finish up their reflections if they have not done so already. They can also finish organizing their portfolios, write in their journals, or read independently.
4. (20 minutes) Turning in Portfolios
  - a. I will project a checklist onto the board with all the requirements for the portfolio (see Appendix C).
  - b. Students will finish printing out all their work and arranging it in their portfolios.
  - c. Once those are done and feel confident that their portfolio is finished and demonstrates their growth over the course of the unit, they can turn it in.
    - i. Students will get some sort of treat/reward when they turn in their portfolios.

## Appendix A

### Sample Minilesson

**Minilesson Topic:** Reading poetry

**Teaching Point:** Annotating poetry in rounds

Connection	Last class, we talked about reading a poem just to enjoy it. This is always the first step in reading and understanding poetry. You can spend as long as you need with the poem. The goal is to just appreciate the poem, let it wash over you, and to notice how it makes you feel before you start looking for how it does that. Once you feel like you have done all of that, then you can move on to annotating the poem, which is what we are going to focus on today.
Today's ONE Teaching Point	Today, I will teach you how to annotate a poem in rounds. For us to have strong discussions about poems in this class and to apply what we discuss and learn to our own writing, we will be recording our thoughts using annotating skills. These skills will go beyond just poetry, as you can annotate anything you are reading, but for today I will show you how helpful it is for reading and understanding poetry.
Demonstration	<p>Watch me while I annotate the poem "The Truth the Dead Know" by Anne Sexton in rounds.</p> <p>After I have finished letting the poem wash over me, I will mark places that jumped out at you or where the language seems good. I will highlight 'procession' from the first stanza and 'cultivate' from the second stanza. I associate both words with forward motion or growth, so it seems odd that they would be used to talk about death. I will also highlight all her references to stones in a different color. This repetition is interesting to me and might be important to the larger meaning. The point of this round is to mark any interesting uses of language that may guide an interpretation of the poem. This round is also for marking any words that confuse you. If there are any proper nouns or words you do not know, you would indicate that and possibly look them up. While I know the meaning of all the words in this poem, I am confused by what the 'this' is in the last line of the third stanza. So, I will mark that and write some possible ideas for what it means next to it.</p> <p>That was just one round of annotation. For the second round, I will be reading for structure and sound. For this round, it is best if you can read out loud. In this round, I will underline the last words of the second and fourth lines of each stanza to indicate the poem's rhyme scheme. I will also indicate with brackets the three-stanza structure of the poem. I will jot down the big idea for each stanza or what makes it different from the other stanzas.</p> <p>After these two rounds, I will write a statement on my interpretation of the poem's theme. In this poem, I think Sexton is talking about how love lasts</p>

	longer than material things, indicated by how she says that men go to war for love and the dead do not have shoes or other material things. So, I will write this interpretation at the bottom of my paper.
Active Engagement	Right now, I'd like you to look at your copy of the poem. Think about an annotation that you would make or a specific word that jumps out at you while you read. Turn to the person next to you and share your annotation and why you made it.
Link	So, today and every time we read a poem, I recommend using this strategy to annotate your poem. It will help you tackle the poem and piece together your interpretation by noticing all the different elements of the poem. These annotations and your interpretation of the poem will be very helpful in our group discussions and as you work to create your own poems using the skills we witness in these mentor texts.
Follow-up	As you finish annotating, turn to the person next to you and share what you thought of the process. Were there any parts of the process that were tricky or confusing for you? Do you see yourself using this as your go-to annotation strategy? Next class, we will use these skills to annotate and discuss poems in small groups.

## Appendix B

### Rubrics

#### FCAs: Poetry Performance

##### Content: \_\_\_\_\_ / 4 points

- Entire poem shows reflection and expression of a particular theme.
- Writer uses figurative language to create implicit meaning in their poem.
- Poem gives insight into the writer's character and point of view.
- The poem is organized in a way that naturally lends itself to spoken word.

##### Performance: \_\_\_\_\_ / 5 points

- Intentional use of pitch, pacing, and intonation.
- Voice is loud and clear.
- Fluent and coherent delivery.
- Purposeful use of facial expressions, gestures, and body language that adds meaning to the performance.
- Evident preparedness and practice.

##### Reflection: \_\_\_\_\_ / 4 points

Reflection addresses the following:

- How your performance went.
- What would you change if you could do it again.
- At least 3 strengths of your performance and 1 area for improvement.
- Reflection on how it felt to share personal emotions and experiences with your peers.

**Total Points:** \_\_\_\_\_ / 13

**FCAs: Poetry Portfolio****Content: \_\_\_\_\_ / 9 points**

Submitted portfolio includes the following:

- 3 poems
- At least 2 must be a page or longer

**Reflection: \_\_\_\_\_ / 15 points**

Reflection is organized in paragraphs and is between 2-3 pages double-spaced.

Reflection addresses the following:

- Overall thoughts on the unit and the writing you have done.
- How you have grown as a writer and a human being.
- Justification for the order of your pieces and how it demonstrates your growth.
- Explanation of each piece's personal significance and meaning.

**Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_ / 4 points**Title Page

- Is present
- Includes a title that demonstrates creativity and previews the writing within
- Includes author's name, class period, and the date of completion

Table of Contents

- Is present
- Is neatly organized and accurate

Organization

- Portfolio begins with title page and table of contents and ends with the reflection.
- There is evidence that thought was put into the order of the pieces to demonstrate growth and development.

Mechanics

- Editing efforts are demonstrated
- Any errors in convention do not hinder the reader's ability to appreciate and understand the piece

**Total Points: \_\_\_\_\_ / 28**

## Appendix C

## Supplemental Materials

## Mentor Text Bank

Poetry	
Title	Author
<a href="#">"Mother to Son"</a>	Langston Hughes
<a href="#">"Out of the Blue"</a>	Simon Armitage
<a href="#">"Good Bones"</a>	Maggie Smith
<a href="#">"Main Na Bhoolunga"</a>	Fatimah Asghar
<a href="#">"Shirt"</a>	Robert Pinsky
<a href="#">"Having it Out with Melancholy"</a>	Jane Kenyon
<a href="#">"Too Much"</a>	Tyler Ford
<a href="#">"The Truth the Dead Know"</a>	Anne Sexton
<a href="#">"Death"</a>	Donald Revell
<a href="#">"Race"</a>	Elizabeth Alexander
<a href="#">"It was not death, for I stood up,"</a>	Emily Dickinson
<a href="#">"kitchenette building"</a>	Gwendolyn Brooks
<a href="#">"won't you celebrate with me"</a>	Lucille Clifton
<a href="#">"Fever 103°"</a>	Sylvia Plath
<a href="#">"Late Summer after a Panic Attack"</a>	Ada Limón
<a href="#">"The Contract Says: We'd Like The Conversation To Be Bilingual"</a>	Ada Limón
<a href="#">"The 7 Most Dangerous Words I've Ever Met"</a>	saltyranchers
<a href="#">Annabel Lee</a>	Edgar Allan Poe
<a href="#">Couples Therapy</a>	Patrick Roche

## Freewriting Prompts

1. Since you've become a teenager, what is the greatest challenge you've faced?
2. What is the most important thing anyone has ever said to you? How did it make you feel?
3. Write about an experience or event you always carry. Why does this instance stick in your mind?
4. Write about a time when you learned a hard truth about yourself. How did you feel afterward?
5. What qualities make someone a good friend?
6. What is your greatest fear—and why are you afraid of it?
7. Write a short story or poem in the voice of your favorite author, favorite book, or favorite place.
8. What do you imagine your life will look like in 15 years?
9. What is the most important relationship in your life right now? Why is that person so special to you?
10. Write a letter to your middle school self. What would you want them to know?
11. What's your first memory? Describe it on paper using all five senses.
12. Describe blue to someone who cannot see.
13. Write a story that takes place completely in the dark.
14. Re-write a famous fairy tale from the villain's perspective.
15. Define what trust means to you.

## Bio Poem

(First Name) –  
 (Four adjectives that describe you)  
 Lover of (Three different things that you love)  
 Who feels (three different feelings **and** when or where they are felt)  
 Who gives (three different things you give)  
 Who fears (three different fears you have)  
 Who would like to see (three different things you would like to see)  
 Who lives (a brief description of where you live)  
 – (Last Name)

**Observation/Feedback Sentence Stems**

- I like how you...
- I noticed \_\_\_\_ came up several times in your poem.
- I wonder if you could say more about/describe \_\_\_\_\_.
- I really like this word choice/I wonder if there is a better word for \_\_\_\_\_.
- I could really connect with...
- I really enjoyed...because...
- Your work displays...
- The strongest part of your work was...
- I was impressed by...
- I enjoyed your writing because...
- It was cool the way you...
- One suggestion I have is...
- You may want to reflect on...



## Peer Review Worksheet

Directions: As you read your peer's work, answer the following questions. Your responses will help your peer revise their piece.

Reminder: Always be kind and constructive in your feedback!

1. What is the poem about? State the central idea or theme of the piece in one sentence.

---

---

2. Who is the speaker? What clues from the piece reveal the type of speaker?

---

---

3. Who is the listener? Is there an identifiable audience for the speaker?

---

---

4. Discuss the diction (word choices) of the piece. Point out particularly well-chosen words and question word choices that may not be optimal.

---

---

5. Point out examples of literary devices (metaphor, simile, personification, etc.). What is the function of these devices? Do they work in the context of the piece?

---

---

6. How does this poem resonate for you?

---

---

7. What questions do you have about the poem?

---

---

---

8. List at least 2 Glows (strengths) and 1 Grow (area for improvement) for this piece.

**Portfolio Checklist**

## Portfolio Checklist

Make sure you can check all of these off before submitting.

Title Page (unique title, name, class period, date)

Table of Contents (accurate page numbers)

Poems

At least 3 poems

At least 2 are over a page

Reflection

Last thing in your portfolio

2-3 pages double-spaced

Addresses all (4) of the reflection questions

## References

- Alexander, K. C. (1990). Communicating with potential adolescent suicides through poetry. *The Arts in Psychotherapy, 17*(2), 125–130. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0197-4556\(90\)90022-I](https://doi.org/10.1016/0197-4556(90)90022-I)
- Baxley, G., & Sealey-Ruiz, Y. (2021). In the Black radical tradition: Poetry as a praxis for healing and resistance in education. *Research in the Teaching of English, 55*(3), 311-321.
- Coleman, A. (2021). ELA + SEL. *English Journal, High School Edition, 111*(1), 77–81.
- Deveney, C., & Lawson, P. (2021). Writing your way to wellbeing: An IPA analysis of the therapeutic effects of creative writing on mental health and the processing of emotional difficulties. *Counseling and Psychotherapy Research, 22*(2), 292–300.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12435>
- Dutro, E. (2011). Writing Wounded: Trauma, Testimony, and Critical Witness in Literacy Classrooms. *English Education, 43*(2), 193–211.
- Emunah, R. (1990). Expression and expansion in adolescence: The significance of creative arts therapy. *The Arts in Psychotherapy, 17*(2), 101–107. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0197-4556\(90\)90019-M](https://doi.org/10.1016/0197-4556(90)90019-M)
- Griffith, J. J. (2018). Writing through Pain: How Teachers can Support Writing as Therapy for Students Processing Trauma. In S. Shaffer, S. T. Bickmore, & G. Rumohr-Voskuil (Eds.), *Contending with Gun Violence in the English Language Classroom* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429424779>
- Jensen, C. M., & Blair, S. E. E. (1997). Rhyme and Reason: The Relationship between Creative Writing and Mental Wellbeing. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy, 60*(12), 525–530. <https://doi.org/10.1177/030802269706001205>
- Kaufman, S. B., & Kaufman, J. C. (Eds.). (2009). *The psychology of creative writing*. Cambridge

University Press.

King, C. L. (2015). Creative Writing Programs as Supplement to the Common Core Standards to Support Literacy among Inner-City High School Students.

Lee, D. (2021). Agency in Writing: Managing Narratives of Trauma in Student Writing. In *Humanizing Grief in Higher Education* (pp. 23-30). Routledge.

Litten, J. (2022). A Girl Facing Home with Tears: Expressivism and Identity Construction in L2 Writing. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 65(5), 399–407.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.1219>

Mahoney, J. L., Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2018, November 26). *An update on social and emotional learning outcome research*. Kappan. Retrieved from <https://kappanonline.org/social-emotional-learning-outcome-research-mahoney-durlak-weissberg/>

National Council of Teachers of English (2018). *Understanding and Teaching Writing: Guiding Principles*. Retrieved from <https://ncte.org/statement/teachingcomposition/>

National Council of Teachers of English (2022). *Position Statement on Writing Instruction in School*. Retrieved from <https://ncte.org/statement/statement-on-writing-instruction-in-school/>

Pennebaker, J. W. (1997). *Opening up: The healing power of expressing emotions*. The Guilford Press.

Reinert, M, Fritze, D. & Nguyen, T. (October 2022). “The State of Mental Health in America 2023” Mental Health America, Alexandria VA.

- Sandbäck Forsell, J., Nyholm, L., & Koskinen, C. (2021). A caring science study of creative writing and human becoming. *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences*, 35(1), 156–162. <https://doi.org/10.1111/scs.12830>
- Schreuder, M. (2022). “Her Voice is Proud”: Exploring the Intersections of Writing, Gender, and Mental Health. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 65(6), 519–527. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.1232>
- Thompson, S., & Reed, D. K. (2019, January 22). *Using mentor texts to learn from the best and improve students' writing*. Iowa Reading Research Center. Retrieved from <https://iowareadingresearch.org/blog/mentor-texts-student-writing>
- Tok, Ş., & Kandemir, A. (2015). Effects of Creative Writing Activities on Students' Achievement in Writing, Writing Dispositions and Attitude to English. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 174, 1635–1642. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.01.815>
- Tsatsou-Nikolouli, S. (2020). Positive Psychology and Creative Writing in Education. *Journal of Modern Education Review*, 10(3), 174–180. [https://doi.org/10.15341/jmer\(2155-7993\)/03.10.2020/006](https://doi.org/10.15341/jmer(2155-7993)/03.10.2020/006)

## ACADEMIC VITA

Cara Himmel

---

### LICENSURE

Pennsylvania Teaching Certification - English, Grades 7-12  
*May 2023*

---

### EDUCATION

**The Pennsylvania State University** | University Park, PA  
Anticipated May 2023

*Schreyer Honors College*

*College of Education*  
Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education, English Teaching

*College of Liberal Arts*  
Bachelor of Arts in English  
Psychology Minor

---

### TEACHING FIELD EXPERIENCE

**State College Area High School** | Student Teacher | State College, PA  
*September 2022 – May 2023*

- Planning and implementing lesson plans
- Assessing student work and providing feedback
- Reflecting weekly on performance and meeting with supervisor to discuss progress

---

### TEACHING RELATED EXPERIENCE

**Upward Bound Summer Academy** | Critical Reading and Writing Instructor  
*May 2022-July 2022*

- Created and virtually implemented a reading and writing curriculum focused on effective communication strategies
- Collaborated with instructors from different fields to instruct a shared group of students

**The Pennsylvania State University** | Undergraduate Teaching Assistant | University Park, PA  
*January 2022 – May 2022*

- Assisted students with further understanding of material in Adolescent Psychology class
- Conducted review sessions before exams

**Fox Chapel Crew Club** | Assistant Coach | Pittsburgh, PA  
*June 2019 – August 2020*

- Instructed 6th-12th graders in proper rowing technique during the Summer
- Oversaw drills and on-water work to ensure the safety of all rowers on the river
- Fostered teamwork amongst rowers

**Adat Shalom Religious School** | Teacher's Assistant | Cheswick, PA

*September 2015 – May 2019*

- Instructed 5th-7th graders in Hebrew and the Holocaust
- Assisted teachers in preparing lesson plans

---

### **ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE**

**Student Book Store** | Cashier | State College, PA

*August 2020 – May 2022*

- Greet customers upon their entry into the store and helped them with any questions or concerns
- Handle cash and card operations within the store's POS system
- Conduct all transactions involving gift cards, refunds, and store credit
- Assist sales floor staff with stocking items, cleaning, and assisting guests when needed

**Schreyer Honors College Orientation** | Orientation Mentor | University Park, PA

*August 2020*

- Co-mentored a group of 15 incoming freshman in the Honors College
- Instructed mentees in seminars about academic resources and equity within the College
- Guided students through getting food at dining halls and moving between classrooms

---

### **CAMPUS INVOLVEMENT**

**Phi Sigma Pi Honor Fraternity** | Brother | University Park, PA

*January 2020 – May 2023*

- Designed and executed fundraising events to help decrease member dues
- Organized and oversaw the recruitment of new initiates for Spring 2021
- Attended weekly chapter meetings
- Participated in service events that aid the State College community